

THE LEADER-NEWS

Serving Washburn, Wilton, & Wing Communities

VOL. 136 ISSUE 33 NORDAKNORTH.COM THURSDAY, DEC. 11, 2025 \$1.50



SANTA DAYS!

Santa and Mrs. Claus pause their busy North Pole schedule to spread cheer on stage at Washburn Memorial Hall, posing for jolly holiday photos during Santa Day. Despite gray skies and wintry weather, Washburn Memorial Hall was filled with holiday cheer Dec. 6 as about 250 people gathered for Washburn Life's Santa Day. Families lined up for photos with Santa, children penned letters to the North Pole and tables buzzed with creativity as participants crafted floral mug arrangements and Christmas mug warmers. The turnout proved that not even the chill could dampen the holiday spirit.

LEADER-NEWS | PHAIDRA YUNKER

Unofficial election results show Thomas could return to commission

Kosloski receives second-highest votes for her spot in Washburn

BY KELLI AMELING
ASSOCIATE PUBLISHER

A familiar face could be returning to the Washburn City Commission once the results from the special election are certified.

Results

According to the unofficial results provided by Auditor Chelsey Brandt, former Washburn mayor Larry Thomas received the most votes as a write-in candidate from the special election held Dec. 2 in Washburn with 55 people voting for Thomas to take a seat as a city leader.

Prior to the election, Sharla Kosloski was the sole candidate to file for one of two open seats on the commission. She received 23 votes from the public.

Other write-in candidates included Brandon Lazier with 16 votes, Mitch Wachendorf with 11 votes and Dan Leingang with eight votes. Brandt noted there were 32 additional "scattered" votes.

Brandt said the next step will be for the unofficial results to be canvassed Dec. 15.

"At that time, given there aren't any changes to final numbers, Sharla and Larry will be the next two commissioners," Brandt said.

If Thomas accepts the position along with Kosloski, they will take their oath of office at the January meeting.

Open seats

During the commission meeting, which was held Aug. 11 at the Washburn City Hall, Commissioners Tim Dockter and Miranda Harvey both submitted their resignations to their fellow commissioners, leaving two open seats on the commission.

According to Dockter's resignation letter, he and his wife moved to the Bismarck area, no longer allowing him to hold the seat.

Harvey cited personal reasons for her departure.

Commission President Mark Lelm thanked Dockter for his "lifelong dedication" to the city.

Special election

At the August meeting, the commission discussed the next steps on how

to fill the two vacancies created by the resignations.

Brandt explained to commissioners if they opted to appoint individuals to the seats, they would have to wait at least 14 days to do so. Once appointed they would serve in the position until June when the next round of elections is held. They would run for a two-year unexpired term while two other seats – currently held by Commissioners Keith Hapip Jr. and Jamie Weber – would each run for four-year terms.

The second option, Brandt noted, was to hold a special election, which would take place at the end of this year.

If going that route, Brandt recommended holding the special election in the first part of December.

Dockter made a motion to hold a special election, noting people have reached out to him stating they would petition for one regardless of an appointment made by the commission.

"I think it's imperative and important that the community picks the representative of who they want to represent them," Dockter said.

He added by taking the vote to the people, it would avoid a split decision on the board if an appointment was made.

"I think it's the right way to do it, in my opinion, and the fairest thing for the community," Dockter said.

Election cont. on 11

McLean County receives cleanest rating for audit

Auditor, staff receive compliments from state

BY KELLI AMELING
ASSOCIATE PUBLISHER

McLean County received the cleanest rating a county can receive for its 2023 audit report.

During the Nov. 25 McLean County Commission meeting, North Dakota Legislative Auditor Jared Mack presented the state's findings for the fiscal year ending December 2023, which gave McLean County an unmodified opinion.

"An unmodified opinion is the cleanest opinion," Mack said.

During his presentation, which he did by phone as the weather conditions made traveling to Washburn difficult during the meeting, Mack reviewed four findings for the commissioners to consider.

Mack noted the financial statements provided from the county to the state auditing team were done on a cash-basis practice. To meet state laws, moving forward, the county will need to prepare financial statements on a Generally Accepted Accounting Principles – or GAAP – basis. Mack described the Century Code referencing this requirement as "stale," but noted it still needed to be done, and the 2023 audit would be last year the state accepts cash-basis accounting for financial statements.

"This isn't a significant finding," Mack said, noting McLean County is taking steps for the switch.

Two other findings included getting extra staffing for the county to help segregate duties within the McLean County auditor's office.

"This is a pretty common finding," Mack said, adding about 90 percent of audits in North Dakota at the government level show this as a finding. "I don't expect you to fix it."

Mack said only bigger cities like Bismarck, Minot and Fargo tend to not have these findings in their audits, as they are bigger cities with more personnel to dive up the duties.

Election cont. on 2



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Bobbi Jo Krueger
701-463-2270
bkrueger@nodakins.net